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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION: OFFICE TREATMENT OF NAMES

Consequences of the orthographic reform on the spelling of geographical names in Austria

Paper submitted by Austria**

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Preliminary remark
On July, 1st 1996 all German speaking countries signed the „revision of the German orthography"; it was also signed by a number of countries with German speaking minorities, too. The introduction date was fixed not later than at the beginning of the school year 1998/99 (= September, 1st 1998) and shall be ended in the year 2005. Every country may start the reform from the date of the signation on. The new orthography is binding for all institutions which are under the competence of the government, i.e. the schools and the administration; moreover they serve as example for other spheres of official life, e.g. editorial departments, print houses, publishers and media in general.

1 Spheres of the orthographic reform and the consequences for the spelling of geographical names

Three fields of the orthographic reform are of relevance for the spelling of geographical names:

1.1 ss/ß: The ss/ß-spelling was more precise regulated insofar as now -ss- follows a short vowel and -ß- follows a long vowel (and diphthong):
e.g. toponyms with the following generic elements those concerned: *Fass-, Fluss- -fluss, Nass-, Nuss-, Pass -pass, Ross-, Schloss -schloss, Schlösschen, Schuss-,*
Remark:
The provincial government of the Tyrol passed a rule in 1971 concerning the *ss/ß*-spelling: in geographical names of non-German origin *-ß-* is substituted by *-ss-*. Therefore the following spellings of inhabited place-names existed so far (selection).
Haderlehner Strasse ZH, Gemeinde (Gem.) Sautens, GB Silz
Innerkrass HofN, Gem. Schlaiten, GB Lienz
Issalm Gem. Brandenberg, GB Rattenberg
Issalm Gem. Gerlos, GB Zell am Ziller
Isshichl ZH, Gem. Kirchberg in Tirol, GB Hopfgarten
Isshütte Jh, Gem. Sistrans, GB Innsbruck (Land)

This rule couldn't give rise to an uniform use of the *ss/ß*-spelling with this province, so that both spellings can be found side by side in Tyrolean place-names regardless whether the former of the now valid orthography is taken into consideration:
Geschöß HofN, Gem. Rettenschöss (GB Kufstein)
Überschüssalm (w Achensee)
Naßtalwald (n Wattens)

1.2. Accumulation of three consonants respective vowels:

The new orthography allows the spelling of three identical successive consonants or vowels in compounds:

e.g. *Schifffahrt-/-schifffahrt*.

Cases like these occur very rarely in toponyms; the place names *See-Eck* (Gem. Nassereith, GB Imst) is written with a hyphen so far to ease pronunciation as well as understanding of this place name.

1.3. Orthography in accordance with the stem of a word

Related appellatives with the same stem shall also have a uniform spelling; in geographical names the field of umlaut-spelling is concerned:

e.g. *Gemse* (= engl. *chamois*), a very frequent generic element in toponyms, will now be written *Gämse*. Most of our toponyms show the form *Gams-* (following the dialect pronunciation). Several toponyms in Vorarlberg in the commune Mittelberg, GB Bezau are concerned:
Gemstelbach (GewN)
Gemstelboden (Rotte)
Gemstelpaß (Paß)
Hintergemstel (Alpe)
Tonisgemstel (Alpe)
Obergemstel (Alpe)
Untergemstel (Alpe)
in the commune of Schoppernau:
Gemsalpe (Alpe)
in the commune of Schröcken:
Gemstel (Paß)

Remark:
All above mentioned toponyms are announced in the „Amtsblatt 52/1961" and could only be altered by a new resolution of the provincial government.

The new orthography allows the spelling-variants in exceptional cases like in the appellative *Schenke/Schänke* (= engl. tavern), which can be associated with the noun *Schank* or with the verb *schenken*; the actual practice is the spelling with *-e-*:

e.g. *Waldschenke* Gh, Gem. Grieskirchen
Waldschenke am *Sternstein* Gh, Gem. Vorderweißenbach, PB Urfahr-Umgebung

2. Official usage of names and the orthographic reform

2.1. The new orthography can be applied to uninhabited place-names, that are names of mountains, fields, lakes and rivers, of glaciers, alpine pastures and huts, mountains paths, ruins, mountain passes, their spellings are not regulated by law.

2.2. In the case that such a name is part of an inhabited place-name, its spelling is regarded as officially fixed and could be altered by official treatment only.

e.g. *Paßthurn* (Gem. Mittersill, PB Zell am See/S), versus *Paß Thurn* (old) - *Pass Thurn* (new).

2.3. One consequence of the above stated facts is, that in future the spellings of the inhabited place-name and the appropriate name of the river/mountain/field can differ.

e.g. *Gaiß* (GB Leoben/St), *Gaißgraben* (GB Leoben/St), versus *Gaißbach* (old) - *Gaisbach* (new).

2.4. The term „official" spelling

2.4.1 The spelling of a geographical name is regarded as official, if it is based upon legally binding rules. Those are existing for the name of the republic, the provinces, cadastral communes, federal streets, communes, inhabited places and parts of inhabited places.

2.4.2 On the other hand there are geographical names in official sources which themselves don't have legally binding status, the spellings of geographical names listed in these publications are not generally acknowledged either, an legally binding official spelling is only valid for the categories of names listed under 2.4.1.

2.4.3 Additionally to items 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 special arrangements are valid for the provinces of Vorarlberg and the Tyrol, the spellings of particularly announced place-names were fixed by resolutions given by the local councils and/or by the provincial governments. The province of Vorarlberg published in its „Amtsblatt für das Land Vorarlberg" (under the head line „Schreibweise von Örtlichkeiten") an extensive list of place-names and declared its spelling legally binding. It comprises mainly uninhabited place-names, and their spelling can only be altered by legal treatment. In this way e.g. all spellings of mountain passes are fixed with *ß* (instead of -ss- in the new orthography):
Arlbergpaß, Flexenpaß, Klosterpaß, Grubenpaß, Sarotlapaß, Ofenpaß, Fiederepaß, Hornlepaß, Hochalppaß, Lorenapaß, Losenpaß and so on.

The Topographic Committee of the Tyrol has passed an unanimous resolution in 1971 which says that all geographical names written with -*ß*- which are of non-German (or pre-German) origin are to be spelled with -ss-, whereas geographical names of German origin preserve the -*ß*-graphem.

Three „Kundmachungen der Landesregierung" of the years 1971 and 1972 announced the spelling of the following place-names (together with the date of the resolution of the local authority):

(old)	(new)
Ampaß	*Ampass*
Aßling	*Assling*
Oberperfuß	*Oberperfuss*
Unterperfuß	*Unterperfuß*
Rettenschoß	*Rettenschoiß*
Straß bei Jenbach	*Strass im Zillertal*

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Fiß	*Fiss*
Spiß	*Spiss*
Kolsaß	*Kolsass*
Kolsaßberg	*Kolsassberg*
Straßen	*Strassen*

2.5 It is recommended that geographical names in countries where the German language is not in official usage and exonyms shall follow the new orthographic rules.